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New York

President:	Mr. Alemu	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Zambrana
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in Myanmar

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Myanmar

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bangladesh and Myanmar to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Thaung Tun, Special Envoy of the State Counsellor and National Security Adviser of Myanmar.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the crisis in Myanmar.

On 2 September, I wrote to the Council urging concerted efforts to prevent further escalation of the crisis in northern Rakhine state. I am encouraged that the Council has discussed the situation four times in less than a month.

The reality on the ground demands action - swift action - to protect people, alleviate suffering, prevent further instability, address the root causes of the situation and forge, at long last, a durable solution. The following briefing is based on our reporting from the ground and is our best sense of what has happened, what is still happening and what needs to be done.

The current crisis has steadily deteriorated since the 25 August attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on the Myanmar security forces. I repeat my condemnation of those attacks today. Since then, the situation has spiralled into the world's fastest-developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare. I continue to call on the Myanmar authorities to take three immediate steps: first, to end the military operations; secondly, to allow unfettered access for humanitarian support; and thirdly, to ensure the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of the refugees to their areas of origin.

Let me now review what we know about the military operations that have taken place since 25 August.

While there have been competing narratives in a highly complex environment, certain elements are clear. At least 500,000 civilians have fled their homes and sought safety in Bangladesh. Although the total number of those displaced is unknown, it is estimated that 94 per cent of them are Rohingya. The devastating humanitarian situation is not only a breeding ground for radicalization, it also puts vulnerable people, including young children, at risk of falling prey to criminal elements, including trafficking. We have received bone-chilling accounts from those who fled, mainly women, children and the elderly. These testimonials point to excessive violence and serious violations of human rights, including the indiscriminate firing of weapons, the presence of landmines and sexual violence. This is unacceptable and must end immediately.

International human rights law and standards are clear: any use of force by the authorities must respect Myanmar's human rights obligations under international law and comply with well- established human rights standards. Above all, these actions must fully respect the human rights of those affected, regardless of ethnicity or religion. The use of lethal force, even in situations of emergency, must be commensurate with the threat to the public order, and utmost care must be taken to minimize injury and loss of life, especially for unarmed people and communities.

The authorities have claimed that security operations ended on 5 September, following major displacements in northern Rakhine, where Rohingya were the majority. However, displacement appears to have continued, with reports of the burning of Muslim villages, as well as looting and acts of intimidation. The Myanmar authorities themselves have indicated that at least 176 of 471 Muslim villages in northern Rakhine have been totally abandoned.

In Rathedaung township, three quarters of the Rohingya population has fled. Most villages and all three of the former internally displaced-persons camps have been burnt to the ground. Just five isolated Muslim communities remain in Rathedaung. Elsewhere too, a majority of the abandoned villages were majority Muslim.

There seems to be a deeply disturbing pattern to the violence and the ensuing large movements of an ethnic group from their homes. The failure to address that systematic violence could result in a spill-over into central Rakhine state, where an additional 250,000

Muslims could potentially face displacement. They are outnumbered by the Rakhine communities, some of whom have engaged in violent acts of vigilantism against their Muslim neighbours.

The violence in Rakhine — whether by the military or by radical elements within communities — must end. The Myanmar authorities must fulfil their fundamental obligation to ensure the safety and security of all communities and to uphold the rule of law without discrimination.

Let me now turn to the question of humanitarian access. It is imperative that United Nations agencies and our non-governmental partners be granted immediate and safe access to all affected communities. I am deeply concerned by the current climate of antagonism towards the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Indeed, that can lead to unacceptable violence, such as the recent attacks against the International Committee of the Red Cross by Rakhine villagers in Sittwe.

The Myanmar authorities have said repeatedly over the past few days that it is not the right time for unhindered access to resume. Given the enormous needs, that position is deeply regrettable. The United Nations should be allowed to reach the affected areas without delay.

I would also like to address the issue of the safe return of refugees to their places of origin. I ask members of the Security Council to join me in urging that all those who have fled to Bangladesh be able to exercise their right to a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return to their homes. Myanmar authorities have committed to using the framework established in the 1992 Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Myanmar to facilitate such returns. While that may be a useful starting point, it is not sufficient in the present circumstances.

Notably, the framework does not refer to resolving the root cause of displacement. Moreover, it requires documents that the fleeing Rohingya may not be able to provide. The United Nations is committed to a plan for voluntary return and calls upon the international community to support such an effort. That should include development assistance to the villages of those who return home, and the implementation of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State's recommendations regarding verification and citizenship.

Voluntary repatriation also requires, as a critical first step, the registration of refugees in Bangladesh, using internationally accepted standards. The United Nations is ready to support Myanmar and Bangladesh in all stages of this important process. Ensuring the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees to Rakhine — in line with international refugee law — will require the restoration of mutual trust among the communities.

Improving intercommunal relations is a critical part of a sustainable resolution to the crisis and one of the essential recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by Kofi Annan. In this highly complex environment, the Myanmar authorities must work to defuse tension and uphold and protect the rights of all communities, including the respect for property rights. Those who fled should be able to return to their homes in peace and not have to face yet another cycle of violence. It will be especially important to avoid relocating those displaced yet again to camp-like conditions.

In Bangladesh, the United Nations continues to step up its humanitarian response. The High Commissioner for Refugees visited just days ago. In the next two weeks, the World Food Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF will visit the Bangladesh border area. On 9 October, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, OCHA and IOM will convene a donors' conference.

In my meeting last week with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Hasina, I expressed great appreciation for the care being provided to refugees. I commend the countries that are supporting Bangladesh in its response. Let me also stress the need for strengthened cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh. In that regard, I welcome the coming high-level visit of Myanmar officials to Bangladesh

The crisis has generated multiple implications for neighbouring States and the larger region, including the risk of intercommunal strife. We should not be surprised if the decades of discrimination and double standards in the treatment of the Rohingya create openings for radicalization.

In moving forward, we need an effective partnership with the Myanmar authorities, especially the military. All involved parties should refrain from any actions

that could exacerbate the precarious situation on the ground. I welcome the participation here today of National Security Adviser U Thaung Tun — as well as the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Mr. Masud Bin Momen. I appreciate the National Security Adviser's efforts to engage in dialogue with various stakeholders during the high-level week of the General Assembly.

In addition to discussions with the Secretariat on future cooperation, the Myanmar delegation has reached out to Bangladesh to revive dialogue. Myanmar has also called on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for desperately needed humanitarian assistance. I look forward to an effective and credible follow up to the authorities' stated commitment to greater access, including for the international community, the media and humanitarian actors. Regional cooperation with Myanmar will also be essential, and the United Nations fully stands behind it.

I welcome the important role played by Foreign Minister Marsudi of Indonesia in that respect. She has been advocating an approach that echoes the three steps that I have been emphasizing and that is also what many countries have been seeking.

The crisis has underlined an urgent need for a political solution to the root causes of the violence. The core of the problem is protracted statelessness and its associated discrimination. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State provide a blueprint for the longer-term future.

The Muslims of Rakhine state should be granted nationality. The present Myanmar citizenship legislation only allows partial citizenship. We encourage Myanmar to revise that legislation in line with the international standards. In the interim, an effective verification exercise, as previously foreseen, should enable those so entitled to be granted citizenship under the present laws. All others must be able to obtain a legal status that allows them to lead a normal life, including freedom of movement and access to labour markets, education and health services. I appeal to the leaders of Myanmar, including military leaders, to condemn incitement to racial hatred and violence, and to take all measures to defuse tensions between communities.

We have taken good note of declarations by the Myanmar authorities that no one is above the law. There is a clear need to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of human rights violations, to curb the current violence and to prevent future abuses.

The United Nations will remain a close partner to Myanmar in addressing those urgent issues. We have no agenda other than to help Myanmar advance the well-being of all the country's people. We have no interest other than to see all communities enjoying peace, security, prosperity and mutual respect. And we are committed to nothing less than easing the heart-breaking suffering of so many vulnerable people — while forging a lasting solution that affirms shared values, promotes mutual respect and upholds human dignity. I call on the Security Council to stand united and support our efforts to urgently end this tragedy.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary General for his briefing and for all that he has done to bring this issue before the Security Council.

As a long-standing friend of the Burmese people, the United Kingdom has watched in horror at the violence that has erupted over the past month. What began as a series of attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army has spiralled into an acute humanitarian crisis, one which now poses a threat to stability and security in the region.

We have all heard the reports. We have all heard of the extrajudicial killings and the burning of villages. We have heard of the cruelty, the sexual violence and the landmines laid along routes taken by refugees. Half a million people have fled, many bearing the scars of the violence. The vast majority are Rohingya Muslims, although they also include Buddhists, Hindus and other minorities, but make no mistake — this is a human tragedy and an acute humanitarian crisis that has exploded with almost unprecedented speed.

At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the Government and the people of Bangladesh for providing safety and shelter to so many until they can return safely, voluntarily and sustainably to their homes in Burma. I also want to acknowledge the important diplomatic efforts undertaken by Indonesia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations.

It is becoming increasingly clear that world opinion, whether among countries or international organizations, is coming together on this issue. In the face of such opinion, it falls on Burma, in particular the Burmese military, to respond. The Burmese military bear the primary responsibility for resolving this crisis, but there is a way out.

First, the Burmese military under Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing must immediately stop the violence in Rakhine state and ensure the protection of all civilians, including the Rohingya. In this Chamber, I repeat my Government's condemnation of the attacks carried out by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army last month, but military operations in response have been excessive, and vigilante groups have carried out sectarian violence unchecked. That cannot continue. The hate speech and incitement to violence must stop. The Burmese military must act immediately and uphold the rule of law. We are particularly concerned to ensure that the violence does not spread to central Rakhine.

Secondly, the Burmese authorities need to grant United Nations agencies and their partners full and unhindered humanitarian access to Rakhine State. We welcome the Government's cooperation with humanitarian agencies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, and we welcome the efforts of the Red Cross to respond to the crisis. But the humanitarian needs inside Rakhine state vastly exceed the capacity of the Red Cross. Only United Nations agencies and their partners can provide urgent life-saving assistance on the scale required. We believe that the authorities should tone down the anti-United Nations rhetoric and stop it immediately in State media outlets.

Thirdly, Burma should work with Bangladesh to establish a safe, voluntary and sustainable way for those who have fled Rakhine to return to their homes. We welcome the civilian Government's commitment to the right of return, but previous arrangements have been inadequate. A process is needed that allows those who have fled to register as refugees. It needs to be a process that acknowledges that many fled without documents, or never had them in the first place, a process that allows people to return to their homes and places of origin safely, voluntarily and sustainably. We welcome the willingness of the United Nations to support this endeavour.

Fourthly, the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State must be implemented swiftly and in full. We welcome the Burmese authorities' public commitment to that and the establishment of the ministerial Implementation Committee for the recommendations on Rakhine State. It is essential that we now see progress, particularly on citizenship.

Fifthly, we urge the Burmese authorities to cooperate with the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar established by the Human Rights Council. If the Burmese authorities have any doubt about what is happening, that is how reports can be independently verified and those responsible held to account.

The Council considers many crises around the world, but the situation in Burma strikes many of us around this table with particular poignancy. Many of us here today have stood by the people of Burma for long years, have watched the inspiring steps taken towards democracy and have welcomed the country back into the international community with open arms.

Given our history and long-standing friendship with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, we remain committed to Burma and to all of its people. We want to see further progress towards democracy, and we want Burma to thrive within the international community. Our commitment is the reason that we speak so frankly today in this Chamber. This crisis now casts a deep shadow over Burma's international reputation, on its leaders and on its military. The Burmese authorities must now take the decisions that will decide their place in history. They can choose to end the violence, protect civilians and defend human rights They can choose to allow humanitarian access, including by the United Nations. They can work with Bangladesh on the return of refugees, and they can address the long-term issues raised by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. But should they fail to do so, they will find themselves on the wrong side of history, and the Council must then be ready to take further action.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

For over four weeks, the world has endured images from Burma that we should never have to see. Much more importantly, we have seen images of acts that no person should ever have to endure. We have seen terrified women and children fleeing from their homes with only the clothes on their back. We have watched people drown trying to cross rivers to safety. We have

seen bodies floating down rivers and villages burned to the ground. We have heard reports of men, women and children rounded up and detained, and some brutally killed. We saw the haunting image of a young mother and father cradling the body of their infant son, a baby who died fleeing the violence in Rakhine State.

Secretary Tillerson has spoken with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. I also met with Burma's National Security Advisor during the recent week of high-level meetings at the General Assembly. We have tried to engage the Burmese military at the highest levels. We have supported regional efforts to de-escalate the violence and expand humanitarian access. And still the exodus of terrified, injured people out of Burma continues, while the Government refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation. Now hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees remain in Bangladesh as they are in fear of returning to their homes. Burmese leaders must come to terms with the facts on the ground.

When we last met to consider the Burmese crisis, I expressed our condemnation of the 25 August attacks against security posts. I reiterate that condemnation today. I also condemn reported violence against other minority communities in Rakhine state. But what has happened since then dwarfs those attacks with its disproportionate, indiscriminate violence. We cannot be afraid to call the actions of the Burmese authorities what they appear to be — a brutal sustained campaign to cleanse the country of an ethnic minority, and it should shame senior Burmese leaders who have sacrificed so much for an open democratic Burma.

The Burmese Government claims that it is battling terrorists. If this is true, let it allow media and humanitarian access to back up its claims. If terrorists are the problem, let the military explain how killing children and forcing families from their homes will make Burma any safer. The Burmese military have ignored calls to respond to such attacks by focusing on identifying and prosecuting the perpetrators. Instead what is taking place is a brutal assault that does not advance justice in Burma. It puts the country further out of reach.

The Government's response has undermined Burma's security stability and its fragile democratic transition. The Government has a responsibility to restore the rule of law and prevent attacks by citizens in its name. That responsibility holds regardless of what individual or group is the target of such attacks. An already dire situation has been made even worse by some of the rhetoric coming from official military channels inside Burma, Worse, that language encourages ugly views among the Burmese people. History has shown us what happens when such views go unopposed. The time for well-meaning diplomatic words in the Council has passed. We must now consider action against the Burmese security forces, who are implicated in abuse and in stoking hatred among their fellow citizens.

The actions needed now to resolve this crisis are very clear.

First, the Burmese military must respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Those who have been accused of committing abuses should be removed from command responsibilities immediately and prosecuted for wrongdoing. Any country that is currently providing weapons to the Burmese military should suspend such activities until sufficient accountability measures are in place.

Secondly, the Burmese authorities must immediately allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations agencies and other relief organizations. We have noted the Government's decision to work with the International Red Cross to distribute aid, but the Government has not allowed other relief organizations meaningful access to northern Rakhine state. If the Burmese authorities are sincere about wanting those displaced to come home, why would they not want food and treatment to get to those people? The Government needs to work with all partners who can help to get assistance to all affected communities. Otherwise, there is a significant danger that life-saving assistance will be delayed in reaching those who need it the most.

Thirdly and finally, the Government must commit to welcoming all displaced persons to return to their original homes. We were glad to see the commitment made by the State Counsellor during her state-of-the-union address to allow those who fled the violence to voluntarily return to their homes when it is safe to do so. We will all watch to see if the Government follows through on that pledge. We call on Burmese officials to work with the Government of Bangladesh to develop a framework for returns as agreed to by both Governments, an idea that enjoys international support.

In the meantime, we have seen the generosity of the Bangladeshi Government in accepting and sheltering

Burmese refugees. The United States is providing $95 million to support urgent humanitarian needs in Burma and Bangladesh, but, given the likelihood of more people fleeing across the border, plus the ongoing monsoon season and the humanitarian need already present in Bangladesh, such generosity will not be enough. The risk that the conflict will spill over to other countries in the region is real. Additional support will be needed to head off a wider conflict. What is perhaps most frustrating about the conflict is the fact that we should have seen it coming. The various communities in Rakhine state have had periods of peaceful coexistence, but they have also seen periods of extreme violence and, between such outbursts, the Rohingya have suffered discrimination and have been denied basic rights as citizens of Burma.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to speak directly to the Burmese people. I would like to appeal to the goodness and hope for the future that exists in the hearts of the overwhelming majority of them. So many of them have sacrificed so much for a better country. I know they are sickened by the images of violence coming from Burma and being seen around the world, but the goal of an open, democratic Burma is still possible. We urge them to hold fast to that vision, not to give up on it and not to be satisfied with leaders who give up on it either. Every Burmese man, woman and child is a child of God with equal moral standing. They should stay strong in that belief, and they will have the future they dreamed of — the future they deserve.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation is pleased that the Security Council finally decided to hold a public briefing on the dangerous situation that has been developing in Rakhine state for many months now. It is a situation that has reached an unprecedented level since the unacceptable attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against the Myanmar security forces.

The tragedy is indeed unsustainable. Hundreds of thousands of people, mostly children, women and older people, are fleeing violence and abuses of all types, which have just been described, to seek refuge and safety where they can, especially in neighbouring Bangladesh. We take this opportunity to commend the generosity and courage of the people and authorities of Bangladesh for welcoming the unfortunate Rohingya.

Senegal has already expressed its deep-seated concern with regard to the situation of the Rohingya and has strongly condemned the violence that they are being subjected to. The President of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, referred to the issue in a joint statement with the President of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Speaking at the rostrum of the General Assembly on 20 September, our President said,

> "in Burma we are seriously concerned by the violence against the Rohingya Muslim people. As outrage is never a selective emotion, Senegal strongly urges the international community to take action to put an end to this genuine human tragedy" (*A/72/PV.10*).

Several speakers launched the same appeal from the same rostrum last week.

It is therefore fortunate that the Security Council has heeded such an urgent call to action and has acceded to the joint request made by Senegal, Egypt, Sweden, Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom, France and the United States, calling on the Council to meet in this format and exchange views, in full transparency and bearing full responsibility, on the growing threat to international peace and security, with the participation of the representatives of the two States that are most directly affected, namely, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

I would like to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres, who very early undertook discreet steps to defuse the crisis, which was breaking out, and stop it from getting out of control. He visited the region and met with several leaders and stakeholders. Fully assuming the responsibility given him by the Charter of the United Nations to become involved and to prevent an outbreak or escalation of a conflict, the Secretary-General, on 2 September, wrote to the members of the Security Council to draw their attention to their responsibility with regard to the situation, namely, to send a strong message highlighting the need to provide the necessary constructive support and cooperation aimed at devising a political strategy to put an end to the vicious circle in Rakhine state. He also insisted on the importance of restraint and calm in our efforts to avert a humanitarian catastrophe and ensure full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the importance of the continued presence and security of United Nations agencies and personnel and other partners .

The statement of the Secretary-General this afternoon sheds further light on the many challenges, including humanitaria and security issues, in this

very complex situation. Other important figures, other States and other international bodies have been deployed and continue to take action aimed at putting an end to the tragedy of the Rohingyas, stopping the violence and helping refugees and displaced persons to return voluntarily and securely to their land and homes. In addition to the neighbouring countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also been very active, including through its Contact Group on the Rohingya Muslim Minority, and has spared no effort in seeking a fair and lasting solution to the crisis.

On the ground with the refugees, in Geneva at the level of the Human Rights Council, and even in New York with the Secretary-General, the General Assembly and the Security Council, the OIC, of which the Senegal is a founding and active member, has brought parties together and called for diplomatic initiatives, along with concrete humanitarian assistance. That was eloquently reflected in the report that sanctioned the ministerial meeting of the Contact Group held last week in New York on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly on 19 September 2017.

So what has the Security Council done, and especially what must it do in the light of the statement we have just heard from the Secretary-General and the reports, as well as those we will hear from the representatives of Myanmar and Bangladesh?

After the preliminary discussions we had on this subject under "Any other business", it appears to us that the time has come to undertake substantive discussions — in private consultations — and decide how we are going follow up on this briefing. Thanks to the courageous recommendations set forth in the final report of Kofi Annan's Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, which was requested by the Government of Myanmar itself and which the Government has also boldly committed itself to implementing, we now know much more about the root causes of the conflict and the ways and means of resolving it on a lasting basis.

Without prejudice to what we might decide to do or not to do after today's exchanges of views, the Senegalese delegation would first like to reiterate its firm condemnation of the violence that has been unleashed in the state of Rakhine in Myanmar, from whatever side it comes, including unacceptable attacks on the Myanmar defence and security forces by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army armed movement. Let there be no mistake: the unwavering support and active solidarity that Senegal has rightly expressed for and with the Rohingyas, who are considered by the United Nations to be the most persecuted religious minority in the world, leaves no room for acceptance of terrorist acts.

The clarity and unity of the international community's appeals to the Government of Burma reflects the urgency and seriousness of this situation, which is also likely to fuel violent extremism. The OIC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union have all condemned the indiscriminate and disproportionate repression facing the Rohingyas. Meeting at the summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 10 and 11 September, the leaders of the OIC denounced the violence and called for an independent investigation into all cases of human rights violations committed against the Rohingya minority. Accordingly, three major objectives should, we believe, guide our thinking.

First, military operations should be stopped so as to put an end to the campaign against the Rohingyas and also to make a clear distinction between the rebels and the civilian population. Appropriate measures should therefore be taken to ensure that all those found guilty of abuses are held to account.

Secondly, international humanitarian law must be scrupulously respected in order to ensure full, unconditional and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance and the dignified and voluntary return of refugees to their provinces and villages of origin. In that regard, we take note of the commitment and willingness of the Government of Myanmar to work closely with Bangladesh based on the experiences of the 1993 working group set up by the two countries.

Thirdly, there must be a definitive resolution with regard to the discriminatory treatment of the Rohingyas; that resolution should focus on the root causes of the violence, including the issue of nationality, which is inextricably linked to ethnicity by a 1982 law that made that minority the largest Stateless group in the world.

Senegal strongly urges Myanmar to fully implement the recommendations contained in the Annan Commission report. We continue to hope that the report will serve as a framework conducive to the creation of a society where the rejection and disapproval of the other gives way to openness to dialogue. That is the only way that Myanmar, all ethnic groups and religions combined, can preserve and enrich the state

of Rakhine's long and proud history and rich cultural tradition and commit to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one of whose essential objectives is to establish peaceful societies where no one is left behind. That is the wish of a country like Senegal, whose belief in dialogue among peoples of all ethnic groups, races, religions, languages is a long-standing and principal feature of our foreign policy that has withstood the test of time.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my deep thanks to the Secretary-General for being present with us at today's important meeting and for his comprehensive briefing.

We meet this afternoon to discuss the repercussions of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, which, with all its religious, ethnic, political and historic complications, is a humanitarian emergency that has imposed itself on the international community. During this crisis, hundreds of thousands of innocent people have been killed, persecuted and ethnically cleansed. Almost half a million people since 25 August have been forced to flee and become displaced from their towns and villages out of fear for their lives. Regional security in the crisis area has been dangerously threatened, which has created tensions and imposed a heavy burden on the neighbouring countries, in particular Bangladesh.

Egypt believes that the international position on the crisis must be based on a set of principles that remain vital in the way we view the crisis, its root causes and the means to contain it. These principles include the following.

First, the issue is humanitarian at heart and is based on the principle of the acceptance of others and on coexistence among religions without discrimination based on race or religion. Any belief that the forced displacement of a part of Myanmar's population to neighbouring countries could end the crisis is absurd. It does not take into account any of the legal or humanitarian principles that govern our modern world, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Secondly, hate speech, violence or the threat of the use of violence cannot be accepted by any party. We reject them totally, whether they are perpetrated by a party or a Government institution that bears the main responsibility for protecting individuals and ending violence by all possible means.

Thirdly, the message we are sending to the Government of Myanmar today is a message from the entire international community, urging it to shoulder its responsibility and take immediate actions to end violence and allow for humanitarian access. It must embark on a dialogue with the relevant United Nations entities and neighbouring countries so as to ensure the return of refugees and displaced persons to their place of origin within Myanmar in line with the recommendations of Kofi Annan's Advisory Committee.

Fourthly, our unconditional solidarity with the Rohingyas as human beings who have the right to live their lives in safety and security does not mean in any way that we support any organization or militia that chooses terrorism under the pretext of protecting the residents of Rakhine state. However, at the same time, we must ask ourselves what choice we are leaving to those innocent people other than to take up arms to defend themselves.

The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility with respect to this dangerous crisis. Egypt has taken urgent international steps in that regard. Moreover, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif has condemned the crimes against the Rohingyas and called for the need to end the humanitarian tragedy as soon as possible. Those are the principles that we must adopt in order to address the crisis and its negative repercussions. Today, in view of the current situation, Egypt stresses the need to act along the following lines.

First, it is urgent for the Myanmar Government to shoulder its moral and humanitarian responsibility and to swiftly address the crisis by ending all military actions by the Myanmar Army and by allowing refugees to return to their territories within Rakhine state, having fled the ongoing exacerbated crisis.

Secondly, through United Nations mechanisms, especially those providing relief and refugee protection, we must provide assistance to those affected on the borders between Myanmar and Bangladesh. In that regard, I would like to commend the people and the Government of Bangladesh for their patience and their efforts to overcome the repercussions of this humanitarian crisis.

Thirdly, we once again call upon the Government of Myanmar to positively interact with the international community, to allow for a high-level United Nations delegation to visit Rakhine state and to consider ways to provide field humanitarian support. It must work

to provide the Muslim Rohingyas with the right to a nationality and the right to return to their territories and their homes.

Fourthly, we express to the Government of Myanmar our readiness to host any national dialogue in an official governmental or non-governmental framework such as the umbrella of the Muslim Council of Elders under the leadership of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, which is the forum that already hosted a dialogue among Myanmar youth from different sects in January.

In conclusion, I stress the need for an implementable United Nations road map and the need to speak in one unified voice so as to make the necessary impact. The refugee tragedy could go on for a long time, until calm returns and a fair and final settlement is explicitly reached that provides the right to citizenship to the Rohingyas. Until that moment, we call upon the Council and the international community to take swift action to offer help and alleviate the suffering of those refugees and to protect their souls and their humanitarian rights.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank you, Mr. President, and I thank the Secretary-General for his very clear briefing and for his leadership in responding to the situation and the crisis in Myanmar. As Minister Margot Wallström said in the General Assembly last week (see A/72/PV.16), the situation in Myanmar is a haunting example of where the seeds of conflict have gone unresolved, with tragic consequences. Once again, we see the human cost of not investing enough in prevention.

The crisis in Rakhine state, which has existed for decades, has dramatically escalated. The situation is now critical, with devastating humanitarian consequences, and there are clear implications for regional stability. Two thirds of the estimated Rohingya population in Rakhine state is now in Bangladesh. The level of displacement has led to a crisis described by High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi as the most urgent refugee emergency in the world today.

Those arriving in Bangladesh have given horrific and heart-breaking accounts of unimaginable violence and abuse. Reports of sexual and gender-based violence are gravely worrying. In addition, large numbers of people, including non-Muslims, have been displaced within Rakhine. However, the total number of internally displaced people has not been established. Their level of need is unknown, owing to the lack of access.

Let me take a moment here to pay tribute to the Government of Bangladesh for their hospitality and generosity to the refugees. I also thank the humanitarian agencies for their swift response. My country has contributed significantly to efforts to increase the humanitarian response capacity in Bangladesh, and we call on others to do the same. The crisis in Rakhine state is complex and multidimensional. It requires a comprehensive and sustained response, with support from the international community. At the same time, in the light of the immediate needs of those displaced inside and outside the country, a number of issues now need to be addressed urgently.

First, we note the statement by the Government of Myanmar that security operations in Rakhine ceased on 5 September. However, displacement has continued since then. The continuing reports of violence are deeply worrying, including reports of the burning of Rohingya villages and of violence against civilians. We therefore call on Myanmar to ensure the immediate suspension of all military and security operations. All violence must end. The Government has the responsibility to ensure the safety and security of all communities without discrimination.

Secondly, we urge the Government to grant immediate, full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the United Nations and its partners in all areas, so that they can reach those in urgent need of life-saving assistance. The humanitarian actors are ready to respond. The assistance arrangements in northern Rakhine organized by the Red Cross Movement are insufficient to address the massive needs. We note ongoing discussions with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regarding the humanitarian response, and we also note and welcome the tireless efforts of the Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Ending the violence and ensuring access to all populations in need of humanitarian assistance is critical and urgent in order to save lives and prevent human suffering. However, that alone will not end the crisis. It is essential that the Government of Myanmar, with the support of the international community, now move swiftly to ensure that those who have fled the country can return to their places of origin in a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable manner. Ensuring that refugees are registered in line with international standards will help facilitate that. People who decide to return must not be placed in camps or camp-like environments, which risk becoming long-term.

We welcome the Government's commitment to implement the recommendations set out in the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State within the shortest time possible, and we urge it to do so without delay. Those recommendations provide a clear road map for addressing the root causes of this long-running crisis, most notably by addressing the situation of citizenship for the Rohingyas. Full implementation of the recommendations would deliver development and benefit all communities in Rakhine. Ending incitement, defusing intercommunal tension and rebuilding trust between the communities in Rakhine will be important in that regard.

Those responsible for human rights abuses and violations, as well as other crimes, must be brought to justice. It is important that the facts and circumstances on the ground be fully established. The Government must therefore engage with the fact-finding mission of the Human Rights Council, and we urge the Government to provide access without delay.

The international community stands ready to support the Government and people of Myanmar in their efforts to resolve the crisis in Rakhine state and to provide urgent humanitarian assistance. In that regard, we encourage the Government to cooperate with Bangladesh as well as to continue to engage with ASEAN. We also urge the Government to cooperate fully with the United Nations. The Government must work to counter narratives and rhetoric that seek to undermine the ability of the United Nations to do its work. Going forward, the United Nations also has the capacity and is ready to support the Government as it implements the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by Kofi Annan.

It is now urgent to put an end to violence and to ensure immediate, full and safe humanitarian access. Safe and dignified return must be ensured as soon as the situation allows. At the same time, the decades-long cycle of violence and displacement suffered by the Rohingya people must be addressed. The report of the Advisory Commission provides the way forward. We urge the Government of Myanmar to take this opportunity to bring an end to the conflict once and for all, allowing the country to move forward with its important development efforts and to continue its democratic transition with all communities in peace. It is important too that the Council remain seized and stand united in finding and helping a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, please allow me to warmly thank the Secretary-General for accepting the request put forward by France and six other Security Council members to brief us on the situation in Burma. On behalf of France, I would like to welcome the Secretary-General's personal commitment to this priority issue.

The terrible facts are before us. As President Macron reminded us at the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.4), ethnic cleansing is happening today in western Burma. Nearly 500,000 Rohingyas, the majority of whom are children and women, have fled Burma for Bangladesh in a month's time. More than 200 villages have been completely destroyed, while others have been set on fire so as to force people to flee and deter them from returning. Let us not be mistaken: the incitement to hatred and violence against the Rohingya people in Burma in the form of public speeches and other forms of stigmatization could lead to even worse atrocities, if we do not immediately end it. Faced with such a serious situation, the Security Council has the enormous responsibility to unite and act to break the negative spiral and urgently find a path leading towards a peaceful and political way out. To that end, our immediate efforts must be guided along two avenues.

Our first priority must be to end the violence. We call on all parties to immediately halt violence directed against civilians. We call on the Burma security forces — as it is incumbent upon them — to ensure the protection of all civilians without discrimination. The Burma authorities must also end the actions of self-proclaimed groups that are attacking the Rohingyas.

The second priority, which is inextricably dependent upon the first, is the restoration of safe and unhindered access for all humanitarian actors. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Myanmar Red Cross Society have been mobilized. They have delivered a significant amount of assistance, which, however, has been largely insufficient given the scope of what is needed. It is urgent that access be granted to United Nations agencies, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and other major non-governmental organizations, such as Médecins sans Frontières, which can provide emergency relief in a neutral, independent and impartial manner. The Government of Burma's initiative to organize a visit by diplomats and humanitarian organizations in Rakhine state is a step in the right direction. I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, which are urgently addressing the influx of almost 500,000 people to Bangladesh.

The significant effort made by Bangladesh, which has welcomed almost 700,000 Rohingya, also deserves to be commended and supported by the international community. We encourage the Bangladeshi authorities to provide necessary access to all humanitarian actors according to the needs of the people.

I have just touched upon the most pressing challenges. Three other priorities, which are inextricably interlinked, also demand that we act because they are critical to finding a lasting solution to the crisis.

First, once we succeed in ending the violence, we will need to define precisely the modalities for the safe, voluntary and lasting return of the refugees.

The second priority will be to launch a political process as quickly as possible so as to address the root causes of the violence, including the systematic discrimination of the Rohingya people — who have been denied citizenship in Burma for decades — and the systematic violation of their rights. The final report submitted by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Mr. Kofi Annan, contains important recommendations concerning the subject. The commitment of the Burmese Government to implement determinedly and immediately those recommendations is a positive first step that must be translated into action. France reiterates its support for the civilian Government to pursue and consolidate the democratic transition process initiated in 2015. France also commends the work undertaken by countries of the region in search of a solution to the crisis.

The denial of the Rohingya's rights for decades has led to the radicalization of a minority among them. Civilians must not pay for the violence committed by an extremist group. That is why — and this is the third challenge — we cannot ignore the massive violations of human rights that may constitute crimes against humanity, as was stated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Those responsible for crimes should be brought to justice. For the time being, we call on the Burmese authorities to allow full access to all human rights monitoring bodies, in particular the fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council last March. That mission must be allowed to visit Myanmar and conduct an independent investigation of any violations committed, irrespective of the perpetrators. We reiterate this appeal today to the Burmese Government.

As France prepares to assume the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October, rest assured, Sir, of the full attention that it will accord to the situation in Burma. During the very first days of our mandate, in collaboration with the United Kingdom, we will organize an Arria Formula meeting — an open informal meeting of the Security Council — which will include Kofi Annan, among other key actors. That meeting, which will be open to everyone, will not only give a perspective of the situation on the ground for all participants, but will also address in more detail the recommendations of the Commission chaired by Kofi Annan and the means to act at our disposal. Moreover, we are continuing our work with our partners on the Council to show its firm and collective commitment, which France believes is crucial and urgent.

Allow me to conclude by citing the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State: "The status quo is not tenable". France will therefore remain ready to take the initiative for the Security Council to fully assume its responsibilities concerning this issue that, through this meeting, we wish to make a priority and a shared priority on which to take collective action.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I join previous speakers in thanking Secretary-General Guterres for his comprehensive briefing on the dire situation of the Rohingya people who have been forced to flee Rakhine state of Myanmar to neighbouring countries.

Kazakhstan is deeply concerned about the mass exodus from Myanmar, with almost half a million Rohingya crossing the border into Bangladesh within the short span of a month following the violence that erupted on 25 August. The saddest part of the tragedy is that children comprise approximately 60 per cent of those refugees. Unfortunately, there have been reports that a fresh influx of 14,000 refugees crossed the border into Bangladesh as recently as 24 September. The lack of measures to stop the flow of refugees calls into question Aung San Suu Kyi's statement that "there have been no clearance operations since 5 September". That serves as an additional justification and rationale for dispatching a United Nations fact-finding mission to assess objectively the current situation in Rakhine state.

Kazakhstan is closely monitoring the crisis in Rakhine state of Myanmar through its embassies in

the region and wishes to underscore the following key observations.

First, we urge the Government of Myanmar to suspend all military operations and halt acts of persecution and discriminatory practices against Rohingya Muslims. It is the obligation of every State to ensure the safety and security of all communities without discrimination and to uphold the rule of law and public order.

Secondly, my delegation urges the Government of Myanmar to provide unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to the affected population. While the launch of the Myanmar Government-led mechanism, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to deliver humanitarian assistance to all displaced inhabitants without discrimination, is a welcome step, we believe that their joint capacities for emergency relief are rather limited. We therefore call on the Government of Myanmar to allow unfettered and safe access to United Nations funds and programmes, including the World Food Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which can provide emergency assistance and alleviate the suffering of the victimizedpopulation.

Thirdly, we urge the Government of Myanmar to take urgent measures so that the Rohingya refugees are able to return to their homeland of Rakhine state. That should be done safely, securely and in a dignified manner, with prospects for them to enjoy decent livelihoods, as was stated by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Astana. The question of Myanmar was discussed during the first OIC Summit on Science and Technology, held on 10 September in Kazakhstan. My country endorses the OIC view on the need to ensure an inclusive and transparent citizenship verification process that leaves no individual unregistered and does not hinder access to education, health care and essential social services.

Fourthly, Kazakhstan is of the firm view that the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by former United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan, are valuable. We urge the Government of Myanmar to fully implement those recommendations in a swift and timely manner so as to promote sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in Rakhine state.

We have taken note that Myanmar has already established a ministerial Implementation Committee to implement those recommendations and has held two ministerial-level meetings in the capital. We hope that the Implementation Committee in Myanmar will profoundly address the problem and make every effort to eliminate its root causes, including the loophole in the 1982 Citizenship Act, which has led to statelessness and deprivation of the rights of the Rohingya community. Unless we work towards a just and sustainable solution for the citizenship issue, there will be no durable peace in Myanmar. That was one of the important recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by Kofi Annan.

Kazakhstan is of the view that inter-ethnic and interreligious strife, as well as the growing problem of refugees in the neighbouring countries of Myanmar, could serve as fertile ground for domestic and international terrorism. That could spread beyond Myanmar and become a source of threat to regional and, over time, even international peace and security. As a country that has developed a unique model of inter-ethnic and interconfessional accord, including the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan and the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, Kazakhstan calls on the authorities of Myanmar to take all necessary measures to restore peace and intercommunal harmony through interfaith dialogue and a comprehensive reconciliation process. Every individual, including, those who have been unfairly discriminated against for years, should have the right to live and move without fear or persecution, irrespective of their religion or ethnicity.

We commend the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh in hosting almost half a million new Rohingya refugees and providing them with shelter, medical care, food and other forms of assistance. The timely help of United Nations agencies and donor countries is crucial for Rohingya refugees. We appeal to all States to extend the necessary support to Bangladesh in order to enable it to cope with the influx. Nevertheless, the issue is not a matter of providing more help. Ultimately, we will need to address the issue of the voluntary return of refugees to Myanmar to resolve the crisis.

Kazakhstan calls on the Myanmar authorities to cooperate more actively with the international community — including the United Nations system, OIC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and

other international and regional organizations — in order to stabilize the situation as soon as possible.

Finally, Kazakhstan is ready to contribute positively, as part of the larger multilateral action, to resolve the crisis in Myanmar, giving all of its people hope for a better future.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his comprehensive briefing.

Japan strongly condemns the attacks carried out against the Myanmar security forces and civilians in northern areas of Rakhine state since 25 August. We express our sincere condolences to the bereaved families.

At the same time, Japan is deeply concerned by the human rights and humanitarian conditions on the ground, the allegations of the killing of civilians, and the fact that approximately 500,000 people have been displaced to Bangladesh since August, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We call for the restoration of security in a manner that is consistent with the rule of law and with full respect for human rights, while ensuring transparency throughout their efforts. We also stress the importance of continuous efforts to secure humanitarian access for all affected communities.

Against that backdrop, Japan sent Mr. Iwao Horii, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Myanmar last week and conveyed our deep concerns and position directly to the leaders of the Myanmar Government, including the military. He also visited Bangladesh yesterday and exchanged views on this issue with the people and Government of Bangladesh.

Japan commends the dedicated efforts of Bangladesh in responding to the humanitarian aspects of the current situation. Japan has been providing humanitarian assistance for displaced persons in Rakhine state and Bangladesh. Furthermore, as Foreign Minister Kono pledged last week, Japan has decided to provide up to $4 million in emergency assistance for those affected by recent incidents in Myanmar and the people who have fled to Bangladesh.

Japan was encouraged by the commitment, expressed by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on 19 September, to the early implementation of the final recommendations by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State to achieve lasting peace and prosperity. Japan also welcomes her commitment to taking action against all people, regardless of their religion, race and political position, who go against the law of the land and violate human rights.

What is important is prompt action. We take note of the announcement of the establishment of the Implementation Committee on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Japan will support the efforts of the Government of Myanmar to address the human rights and humanitarian conditions on the ground.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

China condemns the recent violent attacks in Myanmar's Rakhine state and supports Myanmar's efforts to maintain domestic stability. We sincerely hope that order will again prevail as soon as possible so that no more harm will come to innocent civilians, and that social stability, unity among ethnic groups and economic development will be sustained.

The question of Rakhine state is rooted in a nexus of complex historical ethnic and religious factors. Many of the differences and antagonisms in the state have built up over a long time; there is no quick fix. A viable solution will be one that goes hand in hand with the peace and reconciliation process in Myanmar. China has taken note of a series of measures taken by the Government of Myanmar to ease the situation in Rakhine state and maintain its stability, which is conducive to the search for a long-term solution to the issue. It behoves the international community to view the difficulties and challenges confronting the Government of Myanmar objectively, while exercising patience and providing support and help.

China commends Bangladesh for overcoming its own difficulties to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. We welcome the Myanmar Government's cooperation in humanitarian operations with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international bodies. The international community should encourage and support dialogue and communication between the two countries so that they can duly address the mass exodus of the Muslim population seeking refuge in Bangladesh and find a definitive solution.

China, as a friendly neighbour of both Myanmar and Bangladesh, has been actively engaging with those

countries to influence them positively and encourage them to address the issue through dialogue and consultation. China has provided and will continue to provide assistance necessary for accommodating the displaced.

As we speak, the situation on the ground is beginning to stabilize. All parties should work constructively to help reinforce that momentum, de-escalate the situation and alleviate the humanitarian conditions step by step. China stands ready to work with all parties concerned to contribute constructively to the restoration of order and the achievement of peace and stability in Rakhine state.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his briefing on the situation in Rakhine state in Myanmar. We share his concern about the serious worsening of the situation in the region, which was provoked first and foremost by fighters of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. We resolutely condemn their armed attempts to undermine efforts to stabilize the situation in Rakhine state. We are concerned about the mass exodus of Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu refugees, as well as the ensuing humanitarian crisis. We empathize with those who find themselves in such a difficult situation and those whose rights have been violated.

At the same time, the information that we are receiving indicates that the situation in Rakhine state is far from unequivocal. In recent days, evidence has been received of the involvement of fighters of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in the massacre of civilians. Moreover, caches of improvised explosive devices have been discovered. There is evidence that the extremists have forced members of Myanmar's Hindu community in border villages to leave their homes and migrate to the territory of neighbouring Bangladesh in the same stream as Muslims. Furthermore, there is evidence of arson attacks on entire villages carried out by terrorists. Photographs confiscated from detained militants were apparently intended to contribute to reports to the leadership of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army or its foreign sponsors. Those data back up statements made earlier by the authorities of Naypyitaw that the initiators of the outbreak of violence in Rakhine state sought to maximize the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe and shift all blame for it to the Government.

We appreciate the efforts of the Myanmar authorities to resolve the situation in Rakhine state and support the dialogue with relevant United Nations agencies and human rights bodies, including the work initiated by the Naypyitaw, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in order to organize humanitarian assistance to the affected population. We note the readiness of the Myanmar authorities to repatriate refugees from the territory of Bangladesh on the basis of the procedures provided for by the bilateral agreement with that country of 1993, and to send the current lists of leaders and fighters of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army to the Bangladesh side, INTERPOL and United Nations specialized bodies. The authorities of Myanmar have invited the Bangladesh side to begin negotiations between ministers responsible for security issues and intensify contacts through the ministries of foreign affairs. We think that would prove useful.

We pay tribute to the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh, which has shown solidarity and sheltered hundreds of thousands of refugees from Myanmar. We hope for the solid support of the international community in resolving the humanitarian crisis. These people should receive assistance. The leadership of Myanmar has begun to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Mr. Kofi Annan, and established an Implementation Committee that has already held two meetings.

I wish to stress that excessive pressure on Naypyitaw in the current situation can only aggravate the situation in and around the country. We maintain our unchanging position that there is no alternative to resolving the existing problems in Rakhine state except through political means and a dialogue between representatives of all nationalities and faiths. We call on the parties involved and external stakeholders to demonstrate restraint and objectivity in their assessment of ongoing events. We need to be very precise in using terms like "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing".

It is important to focus on practical assistance to the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh in their search for a solution to the complex and difficult problem at hand, in the spirit of equality and mutual respect. It is necessary to stop the violence and the incitement that fuels it. We must prevent further radicalization in the region, which can be used by terrorists and extremists who are already trying to establish roots in South-East

Asia. We are also concerned by how the situation might impact regional stability.

We welcome the fact that Naypyitaw is not rejecting interaction with the United Nations. The National Security Adviser to the President of Myanmar, who was in New York during the past week, invited the Secretary-General and his Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Feltman, to visit the country in order to facilitate the process of national reconciliation. It would be unreasonable to squander the opportunity to tap into the mediation efforts of the United Nations. In any case, it is necessary to seek the constructive involvement of the Government and representatives of all nationalities and faiths in resolving this long-standing complex crisis. We should not forget about the urgent task of increasing the socioeconomic development of Rakhine state.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his engagement in facing the alarming situation in Rakhine state.

In the past months, the number of refugees fleeing from the region has increased appallingly, which has created a dangerous humanitarian crisis with destabilizing impacts on the region. It is the responsibility of the Council to urgently address the situation and collectively engage in providing assistance. The Security Council must send a strong, unified and constructive message, in line with the priorities identified by the Secretary-General.

The crisis in northern Rakhine state is the result of a number of complex factors and requires a comprehensive response.

First, we must put an end to violence immediately. In line with requests of the European Union, we call on the authorities of Myanmar to suspend their security operations and ensure the full protection of its civilians. We condemn the coordinated attacks of 25 August by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. We stress the need for the security response to fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law. Acts of violence perpetrated against the Rohingya minority, including reports of serious abuses against women, children and the elderly, are a matter of grave concern and cannot be tolerated. National authorities are responsible for safeguarding the lives and protecting the fundamental rights of all people, without discrimination. Safe and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured.

We join High Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Filippo Grandi in his call to immediately re-establish access for United Nations agencies to Rakhine state. Humanitarian agencies and donors have mobilized rapidly. The Italian Government immediately allocated, through the High Commissioner for Refugees, €1 million to community projects for minorities and contributed €500,000 to the World Food Programme's emergency packages. Even still, needs on the ground exceed the available resources and access to those in need and those in the most dire conditions faces major restrictions.

We appreciate that the authorities of Myanmar have engaged in alleviating such suffering, but it is urgent that they step up their efforts by ensuring full international access and cooperation with the United Nations, especially with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We look forward to the visit of a group of foreign diplomats and heads of United Nations agencies to Rakhine state, which is set to take place on 2 October. We also acknowledge the steps taken by Myanmar to cooperatively address the refugee crisis with Bangladesh, and we encourage both countries to bolster that coordination. We would like to commend Bangladesh for its decision to keep its border open, as well as for its solidarity and hospitality efforts.

Secondly, the root causes of the crisis must be addressed. In its report, the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State outlines a road map for socioeconomic development and lasting reconciliation. We praise Myanmar for mandating the Commission in the first place, as well as for its commitment to following up on its recommendations with the establishment of an interministerial Implementation Commission that is in charge of implementing those recommendations. Translating the recommendations into concrete actions is now the priority, because it will pave the way for disrupting the vicious cycle of discrimination, poverty and violence that is afflicting communities.

We acknowledge the scope of the challenge and stand ready to assist, while hoping that the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by Kofi Annan, will continue to be involved. The United Nations system, by integrating humanitarian aid and development assistance, is in the best position to shore up the process. We encourage Myanmar to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Organization, and we welcome its decision to participate in today's briefing.

Thirdly, the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of refugees will be key to defusing tensions and stabilizing the region. That entails ensuring registration, in line with international standards, and finding a durable solution to the problem of statelessness. Also in that regard, the United Nations can offer its expertise and assistance.

Finally, building trust among communities is paramount. We ask the Government to stifle inflammatory language and foster an interreligious dialogue. In that respect, those who are responsible for human rights violations must be held accountable. The fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council, in cooperation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, could complement Government efforts by exhaustively and impartially assessing the situation and facilitating reconciliation.

The United Nations, including the Security Council and the Secretary-General, can play a constructive role in helping Myanmar overcome the crisis and advance on its path towards an inclusive democracy. Respecting human rights is an essential prerequisite that cannot be ignored. Italy stands ready to take into consideration further constructive action by the Council and remains committed to Myanmar's democratic transition and national reconciliation.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We thank those delegations that initiated convening this briefing for the Security Council to discuss, in a transparent manner, the current situation in Rakhine state of Myanmar. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, but most of all for his deep and personal commitment to putting an end to this tragedy. This discussion is particularly timely in light of the plight of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians who left their homes fleeing violence.

Like others on the Council, we strongly condemn the upsurge in violence in Rakhine state that has led to numerous civilian causalities and enormous suffering. Let me underscore from the very outset that any targeting of civilian populations, infringements on their human rights and other abuses are totally unacceptable. The impunity of perpetrators must not be tolerated. Steps must be taken to address the numerous reports of attacks, especially against women and girls.

As we know, there are some recent disturbing developments that were triggered by the deadly attacks committed by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against security forces on 25 August. As the Security Council, we should also look into information about the possible involvement of external terrorist factors in inflaming violence in Rakhine. While Myanmar security forces took steps to respond to the attacks, we are particularly concerned about the mounting evidence of grave human rights violations committed over the course of the military operation in the province. We call on the authorities to show restraint, respect the rule of law and protect the civilian population.

Ukraine is seriously concerned by the continuously worsening humanitarian situation of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, and stresses the need to ensure unhindered access of humanitarian actors to those in need. Taking this opportunity, we express our support to the Government of Bangladesh in its efforts to provide shelter and aid to the Rohingya refugees. Considering the staggering numbers of displaced persons and refugees, the least the Government could do in the situation is to halt all military activities in Rakhine. The cycle of violence has to be stopped before it is too late. We understand that the situation in Rakhine state is an extremely complicated and sensitive issue that cannot be solved in the short run.

We note the efforts of the Government of Myanmar to address those challenges, including the establishment of the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State, chaired by the State Counsellor, as well as the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Mr. Kofi Annan. We welcome the release of the final report of the Advisory Commission and the readiness of the Myanmar Government to carry out its recommendations to the full extent and within the short time frame. We are confident that the implementation of the report's recommendations could help conflict challenges in Rakhine state and achieve peace and stability in the region.

Concrete steps are urgently needed because what is doable and within reach today, may not be there tomorrow. In this Chamber, we talk a lot about prevention. Today, it is still not too late to deliver. For the Council and wider international community, it is imperative to be more proactive in ensuring that the violence stops. We strongly encourage the Government of Myanmar to seize the chance it still has and prevent the current situation from deteriorating into a full-

blown regional crisis. Nobody around the table wants to see the worse-case scenario. That means that we all have to do our duty. The Security Council is the body that is responsible for maintaining international peace and security and the Government of Myanmar is the primary entity responsible for the well-being of its own people.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We highly appreciate the participation of the Secretary-General in this meeting, and thank him for all his work with respect to the situation in Rakhine state in Myanmar and for his message conveyed to the Security Council in his letter of 2 September, which he included in his opening statement of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.3), as well as for the information he provided today.

We are very pleased that the presidency of the Security Council organized this briefing and that this organ, which is the guarantor of international peace and security, is addressing the situation in Rakhine state and of the Rohingya people in an open meeting.

Respect for the rule of law, equality before the law, the defence and promotion of human rights, dialogue and resort to peaceful means to settle disputes are some of the principles Uruguay actively defends and promotes in all of the forums in which it participates. Situations such as that which has arisen in Myanmar cannot be ignored by the Security Council.

Uruguay is deeply concerned by the escalation of tensions in Rakhine state. The serious crisis caused by the wave of sectarian violence against the Muslim Rohingya people is alarming. The exodus of people who have had to abandon their homes and flee desperately to Bangladesh is appalling. The humanitarian and security conditions and human rights situation of the Rohingya people have been very seriously affected. Violations of human rights related to the conflict in various parts of Myanmar, especially in Rakhine state, are not new. Many such violations have been documented in reports of the Secretary-General.

The resurgence of violence in the country clearly shows that significant, pressing challenges remain. Democratic reform and genuine change in Myanmar can take place only if human rights are respected and a true national reconciliation takes place. It is therefore important for the Myanmar Government to step up its efforts to stop the violations and adopt all the measures necessary to ensure accountability and put an end to impunity.

All complaints of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law must be investigated in an exhaustive, transparent and independent manner. In that regard, Uruguay welcomes the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 34/22 in March, when massive persecutions had already begun. The resolution mandates the establishment of a fact-finding mission and requests that the Government of Myanmar provide all guarantees necessary to the mission's ability to successfully conduct its activities. It also urges the authorities to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The only way to overcome the crisis is by approaching it from a human-rights perspective.

While we acknowledge that the situation in Rakhine state is a complex intercommunal issue with deep historical roots, as we have said on a number of official statements recentiy, we are also aware of the military activities of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against the Myanmar security forces, which we naturally condemn. But the responsibility for protecting civilians always falls primarily on States. Nothing exempts the Government of Myanmar from shouldering its responsibility to provide the necessary security and assistance to the Rohingya people and to allow the United Nations and partners to offer humanitarian aid.

The authorities of Myanmar must put an end to the military operations and allow unrestricted humanitarian access. They must also pay due attention to the Rohingya people, whose status has remained unresolved for far too long. The question arises as to whether a Government can feel proud of being home to the largest population of stateless people in the world. Protection of the civil population must always be a priority, and the applicable norms of international human rights law and international humanitarian law must be respected.

Uruguay is committed to preventing atrocious crimes and urgently calls for the Government of Myanmar to stop the violence, suspend military operations, allow the return of those who have had to flee, and facilitate safe and unfettered access to humanitarian aid. Two hypotheses arise ftrom this tragic crisis if we focus, as we should, on prevention.

First, the excessive and disproportionate repression of the Rohingya minority under the pretext of combating a terrorist group will have the least-desired effect. It will sow the seeds of despair, hatred and extremism. Secondly, and perhaps worse, it will run the risk of allowing other global terrorist groups, such as Da'esh or Al-Qaida, to infiltrate Myanmar territory and start operating there, destabilizing the country and in the region.

Uruguay congratulates and thanks Bangladesh for its generosity of recent weeks by providing hundreds of thousands of refugees — an estimated 70 per cent of whom are children — with security, food and shelter. We also thank the agencies and institutions that are working intensively to provide humanitarian assistance, and call on the international community and neighbouring countries to provide the support and resources necessary to address this sensitive situation.

I conclude with a remark made several years ago by Nobel Peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

> "A country that is not at peace with itself, that fails to acknowledge and protect the dignity and worth of all its people, is not a free country."

Mr. Zambrana (Bolivia (Plurinational State of)) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing today on Rakhine state of Myanmar, and we applaud the measures he has taken personally to date.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia vigorously condemns the violence impacting Rakhine state, especially the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group. Based on information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and as noted by the Secretary-General, between 25 August and 20 September the events led to the escalation of violence caused some half a million people to cross the border and seek refuge in Bangladesh, with hundreds of thousands more internally displaced.

We condemn all actions that aggravate intercommunitary tension and incite violence, belicose rhetoric, racial and religious hatred and any act of sexual abuse or exploitation. All such acts must be duly investigated and those responsible brought to justice and prosecuted by the corresponding courts.

Having condemned the acts of violence, discrimination and suffering that victimize not just the Rohingya people but also other ethnic minority groups such as the Daing-net, the Mro, the Thet, the Mramagyi and Hindus, Bolivia once again reaffirms that any conflict within a State must be resolved first and foremost within its borders, respecting the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. If it cannot be so resolved, it should be supported by regional and subregional organizations, while upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law, international law and human rights law.

We believe that it is also important to respect the principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and the non-use or threat of use of force to settle conflicts, in accordance with the principle of a peaceful settlement of conflicts. In this regard, we believe that it is important to encourage and support Myanmar in its quest for a peaceful solution to this humanitarian situation through efforts on a number of levels that include dialogue, consultations, mediation, good offices, negotiations and crisis administration.

In this context, we highlight the welcome and ready cooperation extended to refugees from Rakhine state by the Government and the people of Bangladesh. We encourage them to continue working with the various United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross to lessen the humanitarian impact on the region.

We call on the Government of Myanmar to engage in a fruitful dialogue within and outside of its borders. The participation of its neighbours, regional organizations and the international community will allow it to reach agreements to stabilize the Rakhine state and to honour its obligation to protect all its civilians, regardless of their ethnicity or religious affiliation. In the context of diplomacy, and with a view to the peace and stability of the region, we call on them to work to draft an agreement that contains a concrete plan for the repatriation and safe, voluntary and dignified return of the refugees in Bangladesh to Rakhine state.

We take note of the estabalishment in Myanmar of the ministerial Implementation Committee on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by Kofi Annan, which provide a clear road map for a peaceful solution to this situation, and which we encourage them to fulfil. Similarly, Bolivia encourages the Government of Myanmar to allow humanitarian access so that assistance can be provided to the victims of these tragic events.

In this context, we welcome the good offices of the Secretary-General and call on the Government of Myanmar to take his recommendations into account, especially with regard to the urgent suspension of all military action, an end to the violence, respect for the rule of law, and the recognition of the right to return of all those who had to abandon the country. This will guarantee the provision of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and others, and the development of an effective plan of action to address the root causes of the crisis, which include providing nationality to the Muslims of Rakhine state or, at least for now, a legal status that would enable them to lead normal lives, including freedom of movement and access to job markets, education and health-care services.

We believe that it is inconceivable today to deny a person the right to nationality, which carries prerogatives that allow all human beings to fully enjoy the benefits of a State.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ethiopia.

I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for being here with us this afternoon and for his important briefing on the security and humanitarian situation in Myanmar, which is indeed deeply worrying. We appreciate the initiative he has taken to draw the attention of the Council to the latest developments in Myanmar, which no doubt could easily have serious implications for regional peace and security if not handled both quickly and carefully.

We also look forward to listening to the views of Bangladesh and Myanmar, the two countries that are directly concerned with the discussion we are having today. We certainly recognize, as the representatives of Sweden and Italy said earlier, the complex nature of the challenges in Rakhine State, which we believe can be addressed only through a comprehensive approach that combines political, development, security and humanitarian concerns. In this regard, we encourage the Government of Myanmar to address the root causes of the violence. We wish to underline the need to address all forms of hate speech that incite and fuel violence, and stress the need to take the measures necessary to defuse intercommunal tensions and protect the rights of all communities. Of course, any acts of extreme violence are unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation. That is why we see the initial attack by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army as very unfortunate and senseless. The Secretary-General is right in condemning it. We believe that has only worsened the humanitarian tragedy, not helped to ease it. The way this tragedy is approached from the outset will determine how soon those affected will get sustainable relief through addressing the root causes or how much the situation will be further complicated, with the humanitarian situation getting ever worse, with no end in sight to the human suffering.

Already the Government of Bangladesh is telling us that the situation has become grave, with far-reaching implications for regional peace and security. We welcome and support the proposal by the Secretary-General to address the tragic situation as a matter of high priority. There is indeed an urgent need to end the military operation. The cooperation of the Myanmar Government in allowing unhindered humanitarian access is critical to reach those in need of urgent assistance.

The efforts made by the Bangladesh Government and the United Nations agencies to cope with the influx of refugees is to be commended. Here we wish to stress one very critical matter: the need to do what we must to ensure an acceptable level of mutual trust between the Myanmar Government, the United Nations and the international community at large. The role of diplomacy should never be overlooked, including an even greater role by the Secretary-General. We believe that the implementation of the recommendations made by the Advisory Commission will contribute to tackling the long-standing obstacles to peace and development in Rakhine state.

In this regard, we commend the initial step taken by the Government of Myanmar to establish a ministerial committee to ensure the effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations. It is absolutely necessary, we stress, to work closely with the Myanmar Government in addressing the root causes of the conflict in Rakhine state. Cooperation with Bangladesh and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is also vital in addressing the issue of refugees and its broader implications for regional peace and stability.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tun.

Mr. Tun: I thank you for this opportunity to address the Security Council with regard to the violence

and turmoil that have recently engulfed Myanmar's Rakhine state and the ensuing humanitarian situation. I have listened carefully to the statements made by the Secretary-General and the representatives of the States members of the Council.

The common thread that runs through the commentaries is that "something is rotten in the state of Rakhine". Assertions in the media that a campaign of terror has been unleashed in northern Rakhine and that unspeakable crimes have been committed against innocent people have only served to heighten the concern of the international community. While such assertions might appear reasonable at first glance to a lay observer, expert observers with knowledge of the history of Rakhine and of Myanmar and exposure to the propaganda tactics of terrorists will see such comments for what they really are: subjective and emotionally charged accounts. Nevertheless, we understand the concern of the international community and take serious note of it.

I would like to take this opportunity to apprise the Council of the situation obtaining on the ground and of our efforts to end the violence, assist all innocent civilians affected by the turmoil and plans to find a lasting solution to the daunting challenges we face.

First, we recognize that there is a serious situation that needs to be addressed. But we also need to recognize that the recent round of violence was triggered by the attacks launched by the so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorists.

We feel deeply the suffering and plight of all affected communities — Rakhine, Muslim, Daing-net, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindu. They are all victims of violence and terrorism.

Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. It has no place in our civilized world. I am sure that members will agree with me when I say that we cannot condone terrorism in any form or manifestation. The Government of Myanmar has strongly condemned the acts of terror committed by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in northern Rakhine. The highest Islamic organization in Myanmar, the All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization, as well as the Interfaith Dialogue Group of Myanmar, have expressed their solidarity with the Government and issued statements condemning the acts of terror committed by ARSA. They stressed that no religion can condone violence that results in the loss of life or property. They expressed their support for the Government's efforts to address the situation in Rakhine and its endeavours to promote national reconciliation and peace in the entire country.

In this regard, we welcome the statement by the Secretary-General and many other representatives around this table condemning the acts of terrorism. The Government will work to ensure that the fight against terrorism does not distract us from our commitment to bringing peace, harmony and development to Rakhine state. It is striving to restore normalcy. There have been no armed clashes or clearance operations since 5 September.

Secondly, I wish to stress the fact that there is no ethnic cleansing or genocide in Myanmar. Ethnic cleansing and genocide are serious charges that should not be made lightly. It would be a sad commentary on our times if we allowed emotions to cloud our view and asserted that what is happening in Rakhine was ethnic cleansing without first undertaking a legal review and making a judicial determination. I can assure the Council that the leaders of Myanmar, who have been struggling so long for freedom and human rights, will never espouse a policy of genocide or ethnic cleansing and that the Government will do everything it can to prevent it.

As clearly stated by the State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, in her address to the diplomatic corps in Naypyitaw on 19 September, we condemn all human rights violations and violence. We are committed to the restoration of peace, stability and the rule of law throughout the country. The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the code of conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians.

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. It is home to 135 officially recognized ethnic groups, each with its own distinctive culture and adherence to a variety of religions, including Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. Religious groups have been living in harmony throughout our history. The situation that we face today is due to terrorism and is not based on religion. It should be noted that Muslims are not a minority in northern Rakhine. They constitute 95 per cent of the total population there. What is little known is that the vast majority of Muslims did not abandon their hearth and home. While

there has been an exodus, more than 50 per cent of the Muslim villages in northern Rakhine remain intact and are living in peace with their neighbours, whether they be Hindus or Buddhists.

Representatives of the diplomatic corps in Yangon, accompanied by the media, will visit northern Rakhine on Monday. They will have the opportunity to witness first-hand the situation on the ground. I am happy to note that the Government of Myanmar has extended an invitation to the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General to visit Myanmar. We hope to welcome them in the near future to enhance cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations.

Thirdly, the Government of Myanmar is fully aware of its primary responsibility to address the humanitarian situation. We have been providing assistance to all displaced persons without discrimination. We are collaborating with the The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and donor countries, all represented in this room, to provide assistance expeditiously in accordance with humanitarian principles. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management has agreed to work with us to deliver humanitarian assistance to all displaced persons.

Fourthly, we are concerned by reports that thousands of people have crossed into Bangladesh. We would like to understand the real reasons for the exodus. We will talk to those who have fled, as well as to those who have opted to remain in their villages. The vast majority of those who fled did so out of fear. Fear was instilled in their hearts by the terrorists. Some hundreds of Muslim villagers recently left their homes and headed towards the border, notwithstanding the efforts of the regional authorities to persuade them to return to their villages. The villagers voiced their concerns regarding the availability of humanitarian assistance in a sustained manner, as well as fears that they are becoming a minority in their own area.

We have learned that the villagers have been threatened over the telephone and that they have been persuaded by their fellow men who are already in Bangladesh to join them. Moreover, the villagers remain fearful of retaliation by the ARSA, following the revelation that a large number of Hindu villagers have been massacred and buried in mass graves. The authorities have reassured the villagers that they would be provided assistance and security. However, some have chosen to cross over to Bangladesh.

There has been a growing clamour for the repatriation of refugees who have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. I would like to stress here that Myanmar is prepared to start the verification process at any time. Bangladesh and Myanmar are neighbours, and our two neighbours already went through a repatriation process in 1993.

We are working to enhance relations with Bangladesh. I have met with the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh here in New York last week, and the Minister of the Office of the State Counsellor will visit Dhaka this weekend to further discuss matters of mutual concern and to find ways and means to move ahead with regard to the situation on our border. We have also invited the Minister of Home Affairs of Bangladesh. We will welcome him any time that he is able to come to Myanmar and hope to take forward our cooperation on border security matters. Our stated willingness to discuss the issue of repatriation discredits the assertion that there is a policy of ethnic cleansing on our part.

The new Government in Myanmar inherited a challenging situation in Rakhine state and has had to deal with the consequences of actions by other actors. The current crisis is due to the acts of terrorism perpetrated by ARSA. To address the situation, the Government launched a number of initiatives including the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Mr. Kofi Annan The recommendations of the Commission represent a viable road map forward, and we have embraced them. An Implementation Committee for the recommendations has already been formed and work is in progress. Two meetings have already been held. We must give this Committee time and space to go forward.

At this critical juncture in the life of our young democracy, it is imperative that the international community join hands with us to ensure that democracy takes firm root and that we will succeed in carrying out our responsibility to establish peace, stability, and development in Rakhine and in the whole of Myanmar. That is the only way that we can solve the conundrum in Rakhine. The Security Council must refrain from taking measures that exacerbate rather than alleviate the situation there. It can and must do no less.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and giving us the opportunity to speak. We commend the Secretary-General for his unremitting attention to the issue.

According to the United Nations, since 25 August nearly half a million people have entered Bangladesh, fleeing violence in northern Rakhine state. Despite serious constrains, Bangladesh has given shelter to these distressed Rohingyas, a majority of whom are women and children. Our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, has personally stood by the side of this most persecuted minority in the world.

We are providing these forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals with basic and emergency humanitarian assistance. The international community has come forward in the spirit of responsibility sharing, although the United Nations and other relevant partners are stretched beyond their capacity. Our authorities are also conducting biometric registrations of all those who arrived in the past month. With this fresh influx, Bangladesh is currently hosting over 900,000 forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar. This is an untenable situation, to say the least.

Despite claims to the contrary, violence has not ceased in northern Rakhine state, nor has the exodus of Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Last night alone, an additional 20,000 entered Bangladesh. Any individual among the new arrivals would make it known why this exodus is continuing. They all speak of the use of rape as a weapon to scare families to leave. Available reports suggest that village upon village have been burnt, homes have been looted and people have been abused in Rakhine state. Those atrocities attest to the fact that the Myanmar Government is using arson to depopulate northern Rakhine and take ownership of the land.

The indiscriminate killing and torture by the Myanmar security forces, aided by vigilante groups acting on the basis of religious and ethnic affiliation, have already been cited as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That was also emphasized by our Prime Minister in her statement before the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.14). The Security Council perhaps has a responsibility to examine whether military operations and consequent developments in northern Rakhine state point to any threat to peace or breach of the peace, and what can be done to restore peace.

In the present circumstances, it is of utmost importance that the remaining Rohingya civilians in northern Rakhine State be guaranteed unconditional protection by creating United Nations-administered safe zones inside Myanmar. We must ensure that the humanitarian assistance provided reaches all affected communities, in particular the Rohingyas. Myanmar must ensure full and unfettered humanitarian access to the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

In line with our zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and violent extremism, we have unequivocally condemned the alleged attacks on the Myanmar security forces by extremist elements and offered to help Myanmar to combat terrorism through coordinated patrols, joint inspections and even joint operations. Regrettably, against the backdrop of our overtures, we have heard senior Myanmar leaders and officials of state entities referring to the alleged extremists as "Bengali terrorists". There is perhaps no taker for the baseless and malicious propaganda that projects the Rohingyas as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. This is not only a blatant denial of the ethnic identity of the Rohingyas, but also an affront to Bengalis all over the world. It has to stop.

Myanmar claims that half of the Muslim villages are vacant, despite the presence of about 30,000 military and other forces. Myanmar's official narrative also claims that a particular terrorist group has gathered such strength and capacity that it has been able it to enlist most male members of the Rohingya community in northern Rakhine state and use civilians and children as combatants and human shields. This state of volatility constitutes a larger threat to regional peace and security and, as such, should be a major security concern for the international community, including the Council.

Likewise, the new narratives of Muslims killing Muslims or Muslims killing Hindus should be perceived as the State's failure or abnegation of its primary responsibility to protect its civilians. Allegations and counter-allegations of various forms of atrocities, which amount to crimes against humanity, must be fully investigated by a Security Council-mandated fact-finding mission.

The Council should also take into account that Myanmar has reportedly deployed more than two divisions of armed forces in areas near our border since the first week of August. Troops have been spotted

within 200 metres of the zero line, and heavy armaments and artillery are reportedly placed in close proximity to our border. There have been 19 reported incidents of Bangladesh's air space being violated by Myanmar helicopters and drones, including the latest one the day before yesterday. Anti-personnel mines have reportedly been laid along one stretch of the border to prevent the return of Rohingyas to Myanmar. Incidents of firing on Bangladeshi fishermen have resulted in the death one earlier this week.

Bangladesh continues to exercise utmost restraint in the face of such repeated, unwarranted and wilful provocations. As a responsible and responsive State, we shall forge ahead in seeking a peaceful and lasting solution to this protracted situation through diplomacy, dialogue and cooperation. Accordingly, our Prime Minister made a five-point proposal last week before the General Assembly that has been largely echoed by the Secretary-General and Council members this afternoon. Pursuant to those points, the immediate priorities should be to cease all forms of violence and ensure protection and humanitarian assistance for those affected or vulnerable in Rakhine state.

At the same time, Bangladesh looks forward to immediately start working with Myanmar and the international community to help implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and ensure the safe, voluntary and sustainable return of all those displaced from Myanmar into our territory over the years, including the recent arrivals.

In this regard, previous precedents, including the 1992 arrangement, can be used by adapting them to current realities, challenges and priorities. In that regard, Bangladesh prefers joint verification in the presence of international observers. The forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals should return to their places of original abode in safety, security and dignity. As our Prime Minister stated in the General Assembly, "The crisis has its root in Myanmar and its solution has to be found in Myanmar" (*A/72/PV.14*). Bangladesh, however, remains committed to engaging with Myanmar and the international community for a resolution of this outstanding critical issue.

Our experience from the past three decades makes it obvious that the bilateral track loses its momentum as soon as the international community shifts its attention elsewhere. We therefore urge the Council to keep this issue at the forefront of its agenda and make sure that we manage to arrive to the point of its logical conclusion. We also invite Council members to conduct a field mission to Bangladesh, and possibly to Myanmar, to gather first-hand accounts of the unfolding humanitarian crisis.

Before concluding, I must, on behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh, express our deepest appreciation for the show of support extended to us by each member of the Council this afternoon.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of September, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Ethiopia to Council members, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives and their respective staff, and to the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given to us.

Indeed, it has been a busy month, in which we have rallied to a consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone or without the hard work, support and positive contribution of every delegation, the representatives of the secretariat and all relevant conference service officers, interpreters and translators.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of France good luck in the month of October.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.